The OXFORDSHIRE Garland.

In FOUR PARTS

CHarming ladies fair, I'll to you declare
Such a ditty that will make you weep;
If you will draw near the story you shall hear,
And in your minds the subject do but keep.
In Oxford city there lived, you shall hear,
A nobleman who had a vast estate;
And four daughters bright, in whom he took delight,
But, alas! unhappy was their fate.
The youngest, it is told, was of a beauteous mould,
The loveliest creature sure that e'er was seen:
And her father dear loved her, as we hear,
And to make her great indeed did mean.
Her mother being dead, her sisters, as 'tis said,
They never could endure her beauty bright;
Because her father he best respected her,
So they sought her ruin day and night.
A noble lord of fame down from London came,
On purpose to see her father dear;
Young Cupid's keen dart pierc'd him to the heart,
As soon as he saw this lady fair.
Presently he said, since I am betray'd,
I to her will soon disclose my mind;
And if she yeilds to love, by the powers above,
I'm blest if my jewel does prove kind.
In the garden fair, among the flowers rare,
He chanced to espy his charming dove;
Cupid, be kind, said he, and wound her bitterly,
That I can for ever keep my love.
His mind he did declare; Beauteous lady fair,
Since thou art a walking so retire;
I must show my mind, if you are unkind,
Quickly doth my life for you expire.
With a graceful look, then these words she spoke,
Sir, my tender heart is yet unskill'd
To know what love doth mean; if I forward seem
Then it is against my father's will
Charmer dear, he said, if you'll be my bride,
I have gold to deck those charms so bright.
To make them mine so gay, like the queen of May,
Maids to wait upon thee day and night.
In a little time this charmer divine,
She did yeild indeed to be his bride;
But in the second part 'twill peirce a harden'd heart
To see how cruel fate did them divide.

PART II.

THE other sisters they to wickedness give way,
One of them with a most vicious eye,
Viewed this noble lord, and said, Upon my word,
If I don't enjoy him I must die.
Straight she took to her bed much discomforted,
At last her sisters unto her did say,
What is it grieves you so? prithee let us know,
Then with weeping she soon did say,
O that noble knight that courts our sister bright,
He it is that causes all my woe.
If I can't enjoy him this life I will destroy.
Then to pierce her heart she strait did go.
Her sisters thus did say, Fie, sister, fie, we pray,
Do not to yourself be so severe.
We'll tell him your mind, perhaps he'll be kind,
Tho' our youngest sister is so fair.
They strait a letter penn'd, to the lord did send,
For to let him know her love sick mind;
Having read the same, and found whence it came,
Said, who can know the heart of woman-kind.
He sent an answer thus, Pardon me you must,
For your sister is the only she
That's mistress of my heart, from her I'll not part,
So pray mention this no more to me.
Soon as the letter came, and they read the same,
Strait in a furious passion then they flew;
We will revenged be, replyed then all three,
That is our sister who shall it rue.
Her eldest sister she kept bad company,
With a merchant of a vast estate;
With him she did agree to send her over sea,
Which to these lovers prov'd unfortunate,
This young harmless dove, with her tender love,
Had appointed married to be:
Her father gave consent, so their great content,
But now observe their great treachery.
It happen'd on a day they unto her did say,
Sister, will you go and take the air?
She did consent to go, which prov'd her overthrow,
For such a base thing never acted were.
They brought this lady to the merchant we hear,
As soon as he beheld her beauty bright,
He stood like one amaz'd, and on her beauty gaz'd,
Said, I'll have thee tho' I'm ruin'd by't.
Down sat this lovely maid, her sister said,
Now will you obey your father dear?
Now you with us must go, whether you will or no,
Or else we unto you must prove severe.
Presently she said, Am I so betray'd?
Then farewel to thee, my dearest love.
If I should not you see, happy may you be,
I ever constant unto thee will prove.
In the third part, hear how this lady fair,
By this cruel merchant was abus'd;
Yet kept her constancy 'till she her love did see,
Such constancy sure is seldom us'd.

PART III.

ON board a ship indeed she was sent with speed,
Where by her base sisters she was left indeed;
She wrung her hands and said, Whatever betide,
Constant will I be while I have breath.
Close confin'd was she 'till they sail'd away,
Then at her liberty she granted were;
The merchant for her sake could no comfort take,
But he must enjoy this charming fair.
Thus he broke his mind: Lovely maid, be kind,
For it is so that none can us see:
Let me but enjoy thee, so do not be coy,
And back again I'll bring thee over sea.
With a disdainful look these words she spoke,
Cruel creature, do you think that I
Am thus frighted to be, because upon the sea,
I plainly show your lust I do defy.
I trust the powers above that I my dearest love
May once again behold his charming face.
But if the fates decree that it must never be,
I can never by a traytor be embrac'd.
When the merchant see she would not agree,
Then to satisfy his wicked mind,
He us'd her cruely, for confin'd was she,
Thinking that way to make her kind.
But that would not do, tho' hardships she went thro',
Her prayers to Heaven she sent night and day,
She might rescu'd be from his treachery,
Good people, now observe her here, we pray.

PART IV.

THE ship, we hear, by distress of weather were
Drove upon a rock, and split in twain;
And all perish'd there except this lady fair.
And a sailor who plowed on the main.
On a plank of wood they plowed on the flood,
These poor souls did swim, as we hear,
Being toss'd mountains high, in this extremity,
The plank was drove to land strait with them there.
Being come to shore they prais'd the Lord,
But, poor souls! knew not what to do for food,
No living man was there, only the island bare,
And piercing with cold, alas! they stood,
Three nights and days these poor souls lay,
With their frozen limbs upon the ground.
The lady she did cry, for hunger now I die,
Unless some nourishment for me be found.
The sailor said. Charming dearest maid,
If my flesh your hunger would suffice,
Pray take and eat your fill; I love a woman still,
But once more to Heaven send your cries.
As they were at prayer a ship did appear,
Just discernable unto the eye:
They went to the sea-side, the sailor he espy'd,
And both aloud to them they cry'd.
The boat put out with speed, and took them indeed,
Strait before the captain they were brought.
The lady did declare whose daughter she were.
And how her sisters had her ruin sought.
Great care was taken there of this lady fair,
And the poor distressed sailor too.
We'll leave them on the main, and return again,
To see how things with her father did go.
When first she missing were her father I declare,
And her lover likewise made great moan,
Lest she should murder'd be, also her sisters three
Said, Alas! alas! where is she gone.
They not mistrusted were by her father dear,
But her lover he began to think
That by their treachery she must murder'd be,
When the letter they unto him sent.
Then the old lord call'd his daughters three,
As soon as they into his presence came
They trembled every limb, and concerned seem'd.
Then he strait did say unto them,
Wher's your sister, you've kill'd her, I fear,
And her trembling ghost last night I see.
Then hearing him say so, their eyes began to flow
And then unfolded all the treachery.
Which when her love did hear he tore his hair,
And said, O that charming beauteous maid,
Direct me, Gods! he cry'd, over the ocean wide,
Oh! cruel creatures, that my love betray'd.
Oh! guard her night and day, Heaven, I do pray;
Keep her safe 'till I see her face.
I'll wander for her sake, no comfort can I take,
O Gods above! direct me to the place.
Her father tore his hair, and solemnly did swear,
That they unto prison should be sent;
Their tears did not prevail, they were sent to jail,
While day and night at home he did lament.
Her lover, as we hear, making ready were,
In order to cross the raging seas,
But strait a letter came to prevent the same.
Poor hearts! that did their anxious spirits ease.
My honour'd father dear, thy aged spirits cheer,
In a short time I hope to see your face:
The Heavens do me keep, tho' I'm on the deep,
My God he still protects, and keeps me safe.
Tell my dearest dear I've suffer'd severe,
But yet my love and constancy remain;
A true heart he'll find both constant and kind,
And I hope that he will be the same.
Her father wept we hear, so did her lover dear,
To hear what she had suffer'd on the main.
So we'll leave them to mourn until her return,
And then of this lady speak again.
The ship, we hear, in which this lady were,
Was homeward bound, as we understand:
And in a little time fortune was so kind,
That they did safe arrive into England.
Soon as they landed were this sweet lady fair
To this poor distressed sailor said,
Come and go with me, my father to see,
I hope for your kindness you will be paid.
Strait to the door she came, and knocked at the same,
Her father was the first that saw her face;
Not a word could speak, her heart was like to break,
While tears between them both bedew'd the place.
Soon as her lover dear of the same did hear,
Like light'ning from the sky to her he flew:
My dearest dear, he said, art thou yet alive?
Now our joys again we will renew.
Soon after this, we hear, to her only dear,
In a sumptuous manner married she were.
Full twenty thousand pound her father paid down,
And afterward six hundred a year.
Ten days this wedding held, their joy was fill'd,
For her cruel sisters they did send.
And told what she had gone thro' and the sailor too,
Her father said, He shall your portion spend.
Straitway before them all he did the sailor call,
Six thousand pound he straitway give him there,
Then turn'd them out of door, saying come here no more.
Now of your sisters fate you must share,
Now this couple's blest, and do live at rest;
Maidens, now be constant like to she;
Trust but to God on high in your extremity,
There is no doubt but you will succour'd be.

Printed and Sold in Bow Church-Yard, London.